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Society and Military Practice in Sepik and Highland New Guinea

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Final Report for Period: 07/1997 - 12/1999

Submitted on: 03/31/2000

Principal Investigator: Roscoe, Paul B.

Award ID: 9706042

Organization: University of Maine

Society and Military Practice in Sepik and Highland New Guinea

Project Participants

Senior Personnel

Name: Roscoe, Paul

Worked for more than 160 Hours: Yes

Contribution to Project:

Post-doc

Graduate Student

Undergraduate Student

Name: Williams, Teresa

Worked for more than 160 Hours: Yes

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Sumner, Barbara

Worked for more than 160 Hours: Yes

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Foxson, Catherine

Worked for more than 160 Hours: No

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Stover, Jeremy

Worked for more than 160 Hours: Yes

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Brown, Justin

Worked for more than 160 Hours: No

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Martin, Charlotte

Worked for more than 160 Hours: No

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Golek, Joshua

Worked for more than 160 Hours: Yes

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Name: Cameron, Michele

Worked for more than 160 Hours: No

Contribution to Project:

Processing marked-up ethnographic material (see body of report, under MAIN ACTIVITIES)

Organizational Partners

Other Collaborators or Contacts

A large number of contacts were made with colleagues and personnel at archives and libraries in the US and abroad. For details, please see under MAJOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT.

Activities and Findings

Project Activities and Findings:

NSF funding was granted to help pursue a research project entitled, 'Society and Military Practice in Sepik and Highland New Guinea.' This project aims to assemble and analyze textual and coded databases concerning indigenous warfare in two regions of contact-era New Guinea, the Sepik Basin and the Highlands. To begin with, NSF support was requested for full support of two aspects of this project:

A).the collection of archival and other data, much of it unpublished, from collections around the world that were difficult or impossible to access from the University of Maine; B).the construction from these and other documents already in hand of large text-based databases on New-Guinea warfare and on topics related to a series of hypotheses about this warfare. One aim of the project was to get these databases into a shape that could then be shared with other researchers.

Subsequently, this original proposal was modified to take into account funding received from the American Philosophical Society and the Institute for Intercultural Studies for part of the warfare project and from Fulbright-Hays for a related and partially overlapping research project on the pacification of New Guinea. Later, NSF awarded a supplementary grant to visit the Melanesian Archives at the University of California, San Diego.

Notwithstanding these other grants, the majority of the funding for the warfare project still came from NSF. Since the non-NSF-funded research is relevant to the NSF research project and since the former is difficult to disentangle from the latter, the following report describes progress on all activities related to the New Guinea warfare project.

To summarize the results of the research activities conducted: Part A)., the document collection activities, was extremely successful; for a variety of reasons, Part B)., the database construction, remains to be completed, though very considerable progress has been made.

PART A).DOCUMENT COLLECTION

My document collection activities can be conveniently divided into the following phases:

- a).June 6th - July 29th, 1997: Goethe Institute, G÷ttingen, Germany (funded by the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst).
- b).August 3rd - 7th, 1997: Preliminary visit to the Bundesarchiv, Lichterfelde, Berlin, Germany (funded by NSF).
- c).August 29th - September 30th, 1997: Visiting archives, libraries, and collections in Australia (funded by NSF).
- d).October 1st - December 14th, 1997: Visiting archives and libraries in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (hereafter, 'PNG')(funded by Fulbright-Hays).
- e).December 16th, 1997 - January 31st, 1998: Visiting libraries and archives in Australia(funded by NSF).
- f).February 1st - 7th, 1998: Visiting the Fortune Archive at the Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand (funded partly by NSF and partly by the Institute for Intercultural Studies).
- g).March 31st - April 30th 1998; May 16th - June 1st, 1998: Visiting libraries and archives in Germany (funded by the American Philosophical Society).
- h).May 1st - 15th, 1998: Visiting libraries and archives in Holland (funded by NSF).
- i).August 8th - 28th, 1997; February 8th - March 30th, 1998; June 2nd - 30th, 1998: Travel and grant administration and processing of materials collected (time funded by NSF.)
- j).August 14th - 21st, 1998: Visiting the Melanesian Archive at the University of California, San Diego (funded by NSF).

I shall review these activities in turn, highlighting the more important results:

- a).Goethe Institute, G÷ttingen, Germany.

Funded by a scholarship from the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, I spent two months in residence at the Goethe Institute, G÷ttingen, Germany to improve the language skills I need to read German materials from New Guinea's early historical era.

During this period, I spent Saturdays in the library of the Ethnology Department of the Universität G÷ttingen, inspecting and photocopying German-language materials related to the warfare project.

b). Preliminary visit to the Bundesarchiv, Lichterfelde, Berlin, Germany.

Funded by NSF, I spent four days on a preliminary reconnaissance visit to the Bundesarchiv in Berlin where were stored, I had been told, a large number of Sepik-Basin patrol reports and district reports from the pre-WW1 German colonial era. My visit revealed almost nothing there of relevance to my project. Subsequently, a German colleague visited the archive and confirmed this finding.

Accordingly, I scrapped the plans I had proposed to NSF to visit the Bundesarchiv in 1998.

c). Visiting archives, libraries, and collections in Australia.

Funded by NSF, I arrived in Sydney August 31st and left the next day for Koetong, Victoria to visit Laurie Bragge until 8th of September, inspecting and photocopying his Papua New Guinea archives. From 1962 through to 1978, Mr Bragge was successively Cadet Patrol Officer, Patrol Officer, and Assistant District Officer in various parts of Sepik and Highland PNG. Mr Bragge has an extensive collection of interview notes from his patrols through New Guinea, and he gave me permission to inspect and photocopy these and his other materials. (Since Koetong is in a remote area of Australia, I had to buy a xerox machine, haul it out to Koetong and back on a bus, and then resell it.)

Mr Bragge's interview notes proved to be the most important discovery of my year. Between 1970 and 1974, when he was Assistant District Commissioner based in Ambunti on the Sepik River, Mr Bragge made it a point, whenever he was out on patrol, of taking along a tape recorder and in each village interviewing older men about their settlement histories, the days of war, and other ethnographic details. Each night, he transcribed the interviews on a portable typewriter, checking next morning for clarification of points before moving off again on patrol. The result is approximately a third of a million words on almost every group along the Middle and Upper Sepik River and in parts of their hinterlands. This includes perhaps 20 societies about which virtually nothing otherwise is known. In my opinion, Mr Bragge's collection is the most important ethnographic archive on Sepik River societies that exists on the planet. Up until my visit, there was only one copy of these interview notes and I consider it one of the more significant products of my year's research activities that there now exists three copies (Mr Bragge permitted me to make a second copy for a German colleague who specializes in Sepik River anthropology.)

From September 9th to 11th, I visited Melbourne University to inspect the holdings of the library.

From September 12th to 20th, I inspected published and unpublished materials held at the University Archives and library of Sydney University.

From September 21st to 26th, I visited the Australian Archives, Menzies Library, and National Archives of Australia in Canberra. The main object of my visit to Canberra had been to liaise with Dr Bryant Allen of the Human Geography Department, Australian National University to arrange access to the department's computer databases on PNG agriculture and land systems. Unfortunately, just before I arrived he was called away to PNG on an emergency mission to assess the El-Nino inspired drought then beginning to strike that country. Subsequently, I revisited Canberra and was able to obtain the computer files I needed (see below).

From September 27th to 30th, I visited the University Archives of the University of Queensland, Brisbane. The object of my visit was an unpublished manuscript by Edward Beazley about his life as a gold prospector and labour recruiter in the Sepik Basin. I also found Beazley's diaries, however, which contained an account of his exploration with Bill McGregor into the Enga region of highland PNG. Even among Melanesian specialists, the Leahy brothers are widely and famously believed to have been the first whites to enter the highlands (the film, *First Contact*, has been influential in spreading this view). It is less well known that the visit covered in Beazley's diary in fact preceded the Leahy's by two years.

d). Visiting archives and libraries in Port Moresby, PNG.

Funded by Fulbright-Hays and the Institute for Intercultural Studies, the period October 1st - December 14th was the most trying of my year away. Most of the time was spent in the capital, Port Moresby, inspecting and copying published and unpublished material in the National Archives and the New Guinea Collection of the Somare Library, University of Papua New Guinea. Because of power cuts caused by the drought that had begun to bite about a month before my arrival, and because of problems with the University's photocopy machines, this was a difficult task. Fortunately, I had overestimated the amount of material I would find in Port Moresby, so I was able to inspect and/or copy all of the material I needed. In Moresby, I was successful in purchasing on microfiche all of the National Archive's patrol report holdings for the Sepik and the Highlands.

e). Visiting libraries and archives in Australia.

Funded by NSF, I worked from December 16th to 31st (except for Christmas) in the Mitchell Library in Sydney where, in addition to material I had expected to locate, I discovered several documents I had not expected to find (the Fox brothers' diary of their 'first-contact' travels through the Western Highlands of PNG in 1934; the diary of Ted Yeoman, a gold prospector in the Sepik and Eastern Highlands; a pre-WW1 report of a patrol into Anga territory).

From January 1st to 9th, I revisited Canberra, this time managing to liaise with Dr Allen and obtain six megabytes of the computer files I wanted. In addition, I completed my work at the Menzies Library; at the National Archives, I took notes from the diaries of Mick Leahy and Mick Dwyer, covering their 'first-contact' journeys into the Eastern and Central Highlands; and I consulted with Drs Robin Hide and Chris Ballard, who pointed me to further early Highlands material.

By the luckiest of accidents while in PNG, I had learned of two extremely important sources of material just recently deposited at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. One was the papers of Ken Thomas, a Sepik patrol officer in the 1920's and 1930's who had had some anthropological training. The other was the papers of Norman

and Sheila Draper, Baptist missionaries among the Kyaka Enga in the early 1950's and in the Baliem Valley of Irian Jaya in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Between January 10th and 17th, I was able to fit in a trip to Adelaide to inspect and copy this material. The Draper's Baliem Valley papers were of especial interest: the Drapers made first-contact in the Tiom area and, during their first years there, warfare was still in full swing.

While at the Museum, my colleague Dr Barry Craig passed on to me computer copies of J.R. Black's diaries of his participation in the Sepik-Hagen 'first-contact' patrol of the 1930's. In addition, he arranged for me to inspect and copy his ex-wife's unpublished fieldnotes from the early period of white contact with the Telefomin people.

For the period 18th - 31st, January, I returned to Sydney for further work in the Mitchell and Sydney University Libraries.

f). Visiting the Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Funded by NSF and the Institute for Intercultural Studies, I travelled to Wellington, New Zealand for the period February 1st to 7th to visit the Reo Fortune archive at the Turnbull Library. In 1935, Fortune worked amongst the Kamano people of the Eastern Highlands of PNG and was one of the very few anthropologists who studied a Melanesian group at a time when it was still at war. My main object was an unpublished ethnographic manuscript about the Kamano. I was able to photocopy this manuscript and an unpublished paper on the Kamano. In addition, I found parts of several unpublished papers he had written about the Mountain Arapesh while working amongst those people with his wife, Margaret Mead. These deal in considerable detail with Mountain Arapesh warfare and are a significant discovery. With the blessing of Fortune's executor, Ann McLain, I am currently trying to assemble the (very disorganized) parts of these papers to see if they can be formed into a publishable whole.

g). Visiting libraries and archives in Germany.

Funded by the American Philosophical Society, I travelled to various libraries and archives in Germany: from March 31st to April 10th, the library of the Universität Frankfurt; from April 13th to 18th, the library of the Universität Göttingen; April 20th to 25th, the Anthropos Institut and the Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut, Sankt Augustin; May 17th to 21st, the archives of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Neuendettelsau, Bavaria; May 29th to 30th, the Ethnological Museum, Freiburg.

I was able to inspect about 90% of the published journal and book materials I had hoped to locate in Germany and photocopied over 600 documents. I did not know ahead of time what unpublished archival material I might find, but extensive and useful materials were unearthed both at the Lutheran Archives and the Anthropos Institut. Of particular importance were seven unpublished manuscripts and sets of fieldnotes on little known Sepik societies that were lying in a cupboard at the Anthropos Institut. To the best of my knowledge, these were hitherto unknown to Sepik anthropology.

h). Visiting libraries and archives in Holland.

From May 1st to 15th, funded by NSF, I visited the library of the KITLV in Leiden and the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague. Some difficulties were encountered here. I arrived at the KITLV to discover it closed for several days of vacation; the colleague sponsoring my visit had forgotten to tell me of the closing. I rearranged my timetable to visit the Rijksarchief, only to discover that, because of extensive renovations, seats in the reading room had to be booked in advance.

I learned however that, in late 1997, a private company had produced, on microfiche, almost all the unpublished material I had hoped to collect at the KITLV and the Rijksarchief, at a cost far below what otherwise I would have been charged for photocopying. I was able to purchase these microfiches. When the KITLV reopened, I was able to inspect all of the published material I had hoped to find in the Netherlands.

i). Travel and grant administration and processing of materials collected.

From August 8th to 28th, 1997, February 8th to March 30th, 1998, and June 2nd to 30th, 1998, I was involved in arranging my various trips, administering the grants I had been awarded, and starting to catalogue, organize, and process the material I collected over the last year.

j). Visiting the Melanesian Archive at the University of California, San Diego.

From August 14th to the 21st, 1998, funded by NSF, I inspected published and unpublished documents held at the Melanesian Archive at the University of California, San Diego.

PART B: DATABASE CONSTRUCTION

From July 1st, 1998 to December 31st, 1999, with work-study student aid, attention was focussed on processing materials collected for this project over the last five years or so and constructing databases from them. Two types of ethnographic database are involved: coded databases and a text-based database.

The Coded Databases

A coded, computer database on the societies of the Sepik Basin has been completed. This comprises a variety of data on 1,484 census units (approximately equivalent to villages). These data are: language and dialect identification, grid-location, altitude, subsistence, and total population in the late 1950's/early 1960's. This database is linkable by census unit to a copy of the Agricultural

Systems of Papua New Guinea database and the Land Systems of Papua New Guinea database, both supplied me by the Department of Human Geography, Australian National University. These databases include numerous items of ecological information.

This completed database reflects the situation in the Sepik Basin in the 1950s/1960s. The material gathered under this project has made it very apparent, however, that post-contact settlement and demographic changes in the Sepik were much more pronounced than Melanesian ethnographers generally recognize. A further coded database is therefore under construction that will provide best estimates of the same information for the contact era. Since these data involve a lot of work, it will be some while before this second database is completed.

It had been intended to construct similar databases for the Highlands of New Guinea. The relevant material has all been gathered, but an unanticipated problem was encountered. Locational data for the settlements of the densely populated regions of the Highland are of much poorer resolution than had been expected. Construction of this database has been interrupted while this problem is pondered.

The Text-based Database

The construction of the text-based database involves three steps:

- a). I personally marked up documents for later processing by work-study students
- b). The marked-up documents were then processed to create a computer text file. This step of the work was mostly done by work-study students, who either typed the relevant ethnographic material from the marked-up documents (if the documents were of poor visual quality) or scanned and optically character read them (if the document copies were of good quality). Students then proofed and provided appropriate citations to create a computer text file.
- c). I then organized and entered these text files into the master database. This involved identifying the cultural unit (or units) that the text files described (e.g., Mae Enga, Kyaka Enga, etc); organizing the information by topic and sub-topic (e.g., under *Warfare*, *Defensive organization - settlements*, *Preparations for war - ritual*, etc); and finally, transferring this information to the master database.

By mid-February, 2000, a total of 2.64 million words had been marked up and extracted into computer text files (i.e., steps a). and b).). At a rough estimate, this represents about 90% of the total English-language documents that appear to be relevant to the warfare project. Work continues on the remaining 10% of English language material and on translating and entering into the master database German and Dutch materials collected.

Of these 2.64 million words, 1.47 million have also been organized and entered into the master database (i.e., steps a)., b)., and c).). Work continues on organizing and entering into the database the remaining 1.17 million words.

A number of factors arose that prevented me from achieving my goal of 100% completion of the master database by the end of the NSF funding period.

- i). My receipt of a Fulbright-Hays scholarship to undertake a related research project cut down on the amount of time that, in my original proposal, I had forecast I would have available for database construction.
- ii). The success of Part A of the project - document collection - significantly increased the work load beyond what I had anticipated. During the document collection phase, I discovered far more relevant material than I had expected to encounter. Bragge's interview notes alone, for example, comprise about a third of a million words, of which about 67,000 words proved relevant and needed to be extracted. A large body of valuable, unpublished manuscripts (in German) were discovered in the archives of the Anthropos Institut. Some two hundred relevant Dutch reports were found in Holland, when I had expected to find only a score or two.
- iii). Notwithstanding a scholarship to improve my German at the Goethe Institute in Goettingen, my progress in translating German material is still slower than I would like, and my progress on Dutch translation is very slow. For obvious reasons, I cannot rely on work-study help for processing these documents.
- iv). I underestimated the time that some parts of the database-construction process would demand. Step c). (above) has proven particularly demanding. Identifying the cultural unit that a document describes is often frustratingly difficult, sometimes requiring that an author's travels and routes be reconstructed in detail on large-scale maps of New Guinea. This task has been further complicated by the provisional nature of linguistic work in New Guinea: it is difficult to keep abreast of the frequent language boundary revisions that have occurred over the last 15 years. In addition, simply organizing and entering identified information into the master database has proved a significantly more time consuming task than I anticipated (by a factor of about three).

DATABASE AVAILABILITY

An important rationale for this project was to make available to other interested scholars the various databases described above. Although these are not yet completed, some planning has taken place as to how best they may be made available. The rapid evolution of electronic information storage devices has emerged as a major obstacle to this planning. At the beginning of this project, for example, files were stored on diskette. Subsequently, these were transferred to zip disks, and at the moment I am having to contemplate transferring to DVD or writable CD.

The Melanesian Archive at the University of California, San Diego has expressed interest in archiving both electronic and hard copies of the databases. The advantages of this arrangement are that a).this is the premier archive for New Guinea studies in this country, and b).the databases would be preserved in a durable form (archival paper), reducing the risks of catastrophic loss if my electronic copies and backups were corrupted and side-stepping the technological evolution problem.

HRAF at Yale University have suggested that HRAF could put the databases onto CDÆs and make them available to scholars at cost.

Professor Alaric Faulkner has suggested that I could piggy-back my databases on the historic archaeology databases that he has put on the Web through the University of Maine. This seems an ideal solution for several reasons. It avoids some of the technological evolution dilemmas; it would allow me to make available portions of the databases as I complete them (rather than waiting until they are all completed); and it would permit me to update the databases in the future if I discover new documentary material (as seems inevitable).

Project Training and Development:

Since database construction is still in process, these are early days to be reporting major results from the project's analysis. Nevertheless, a few preliminary findings deserve mention.

i).The history of Europeans in Highland New Guinea needs to be reconsidered. It is commonly supposed that the Leahy brothers were the first Europeans to enter the Highlands. The materials I have collected make it clear that, in the Eastern Highlands, missionaries of the Neuendettelsau Mission were touring parts of the region at least five years before the Leahys, and had established native catechists in perhaps a score of villages by the time the Leahys arrived. Meanwhile, in the Western Highlands, William MacGregor and Bill Beazeley had reached Enga territory a couple of years before the Leahys entered the Eastern Highlands.

ii).It has become vividly - and disturbingly - clear that Melanesian anthropology has seriously underestimated the effects of contact on New Guinea societies. The standard ethnographies of Sepik and Highland New Guinea societies appear for the most part to be rather poor representations of the culture and social organization of these societies at contact. The social and cultural consequences of pacification, in particular, seem to have been underestimated. To take just one example: within a couple of years of contact with officers of the Australian administration, many of the small hilltop villages of the Eastern Highlands had moved to lower ground, coalescing with other villages (some of them enemies) and precipitating significant social and cultural reorganization. Although these changes are noted in a number of standard ethnographies, these works focus on the post-contact organizational structure, tending to represent it as though it were essentially unchanged from contact-era organization. To mention just one consequence of this strategy: at least some of the famous and much-debated looseness of Highland social structure seems actually to have been a looseness that stemmed from these post-contact village coalescences.

Counterbalancing these dismaying findings are the (largely) unpublished documents that support them (e.g., *The Kamanuku* - Wilhelm Bergman; *Men of the Purari* - Reo Fortune; *Vierzig Jahre in Neu-Guinea* - Wilhelm Bergman; *Traders and Planters of Koroka* - Ken Thomas; the *Anthropos-Institute* manuscripts - various authors). These documents, written by people resident in the Sepik and the Highlands much earlier than most anthropologists, allow a number of aspects of contact-era society and culture to be reconstructed with some confidence. Because they are unpublished, they have to date been almost entirely ignored.

iii).Contrary to Marshall SahlinsÆs depiction of the Big-man as the typical New Guinea political leader, the data collected in this project indicate that, if one can talk of a typical New Guinea leader at all, then he was a war leader rather than a transactor of material wealth. I make this point in a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* (June 2000).

Research Training:

Those who worked on the project are the PI and a number of work-study students. The latter gained training in scanning and optical character reading technology and in the proper citational forms for ethnographic writing.

Outreach Activities:

Outreach activities were not part of this project.

Journal Publications

Roscoe, Paul, "New Guinea Leadership as Ethnographic Analogy", *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*
(*In press, appearing in June 2000.*), p. 79, vol. 7(2), (2000).)

Accepted

Books or Other One-time Publications

Web/Internet Sites

URL(s):

No Web site as yet

Description:

Other Specific Products

Product Type: Data or databases

Product Description:

The data collected are described in the body of this report, under MAJOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT.

The database is partly completed and those parts can be made available to other scholars on request.

Sharing Information:

Please see body of this report, under MAJOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT.

Contributions

None

Categories for which nothing is reported:

Organizational Partners

Any Book

Any Contribution